THE PIED PIPER IN PUDDING LANE

By SARAH ADDINGTON

Illustrated by GERTRUDE A. KAY

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THE PIED PIPER IN PUDDING LANE

What a chase that was!

(See Page 39)

THE
PIED PIPER
IN PUDDING LANE

Being the truth about the Pied Piper, as Santa, oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Claus, discovered it before ever he left Pudding Lane

By SARAH ADDINGTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
GERTRUDE A. KAY

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PREFACE

You remember, of course, how once, when Santa was a little boy, the people of Pudding Lane were frightened half out of their senses by the Pied Piper, that fellow who had piped away the children of Hamelin. And you remember, too, how Santa saved the Pudding-Lane children from him just as they were about to follow him away, while their mothers were all at Mrs. Claus's party.

But that was n't the end of the affair by any means. Santa had another adventure with the dancing man in

brown the very next day or so — an adventure that resulted in an important discovery. Much has been said and written about the Pied Piper, but Santa found out the truth — and here it is.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	Trouble Ahead for the Pied Piper	1
II.	Where Santa Was	8
III.	Company at the Clauses'	14
IV.	Unwelcome Guests in Pudding Lane	20
V.	Bad News	27
VI.	A Walk With Mother Goose	33
VII.	Something Very Exciting Happens	38
VIII.	A Conversation With the Pied Piper	42
IX.	Mother Goose's Answer	47
X.	The Pied Piper's Cave	51
XI.	The Wonderful Castles	56
XII.	The Pied Piper's Farm.	64
XIII.	The Fountain	68
XIV.	Home Again	75
XV.	Helping to Feed the Orphans	83
XVI.	A Hullabaloo down Pudding Lane	87
XVII.	A Turn in Events	94

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

What a chase that was! . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"Happy New Year, Mrs. Claus," he greeted her . . 22

"You see, it rains cats and dogs here," said the Pied Piper calmly 54

Santa jumped to his feet and made a low bow . . . 80

THE PIED PIPER IN PUDDING LANE

I

TROUBLE AHEAD FOR THE PIED PIPER

THERE was no doubt about it, the Pied Piper was in for a serious time of it in Pudding Lane.

For when old King Cole heard of his attempt to pipe away all the children of the kingdom, he flew into a fearful rage, the like of which had never been seen in all the years of the old fellow's reign.

He called for his pipe to have a smoke and think it over, but he only bit off the end of it in his fury. He

called for his bowl, but the eggnog seemed only to make him more angry, instead of cheering him. Finally he called for his fiddlers three, but even their jolly music failed to rouse him from his black mood, and he continued to frown and scowl and mumble and growl until the poor Queen of Hearts on the throne beside him trembled in her boots, and was almost afraid to look at him.

And he was usually such a merry old soul! It was really very terrifying, and everybody on Pudding Lane was extremely upset and worried about the whole affair.

Mrs. Solomon Grundy went over to see Mrs. Claus, the mother of Santa,

with the latest news. Somehow Mrs. Grundy always knew what was going on in Pudding Lane, and often she knew what was going on even before it happened! Which was quite remarkable, you 'll have to admit.

"They say King Cole is going to send out a search-party for the Pied Piper and have him hanged," said Mrs. Grundy.

"Have him hanged!" exclaimed Mrs. Claus. "What a notion!"

"It 's very dangerous to have the fellow lurking about," explained Mrs. Grundy. "For even if Santa did save the children of Pudding Lane from him yesterday, the Piper's just as apt to try the trick again, you know."

"Of course," agreed Mrs. Claus, and feeling very kindly toward Mrs. Grundy for mentioning Santa in that flattering way, she rose to fetch her some tarts from the cupboard. People were apt to treat Mrs. Grundy well, anyway, for her tongue was a sharp one and she did say the unkindest things about people she did n't like. *She* said, for example, that the only reason in the world Mrs. Spratt would eat no lean meat was because she was so stingy she did n't want to leave anything on the platter. And Mrs. Grundy had even been known to criticize the Queen of Hearts, who, she maintained, was a silly creature, not at all the woman for King Cole. So you see, Mrs. Claus

did well to feed her tarts and keep her in a good humor.

While Mrs. Grundy was feasting on Mr. Claus's best gooseberry tarts, in came the baker himself. But instead of his usual stiff white apron, the man wore a long, flapping coat in the belt of which was a murderous big sharp knife. And instead of his usual serene expression he wore a strange, fierce, desperate look. He did n't look like a baker at all any more, but like a terrible pirate.

"My goodness!" gasped Mrs. Claus, her eyes popping at the sight of her husband. "Whatever in the world is the matter with you, baker?"

"I 've been called by the King," and

he had even changed his voice for a new and savage roar. "I 'm going out with the butcher and the candlestick-maker and the rest of the neighbors, and we 're going to find the Pied Piper and hang him to a tree!" He flourished his knife in the air.

"Very well," replied Mrs. Claus. "But need you shake your knife at Mrs. Grundy in that bloodthirsty manner?" She was plainly much annoyed.

Mr. Claus, looking a bit sheepish, bowed to Mrs. Grundy.

"That 's better," said Mrs. Claus with approval. "I must say, baker, that bandits' manners don't become you as they might."

But the baker had gone, swinging

his knife, switching his coat-tails. He really was blustering a great deal for a peaceful baker.

"It's queer what a greatcoat and a sword can do to a man," said Mrs. Claus to Mrs. Grundy.

"Better than no man at all, though, neighbor." Mrs. Grundy put her handkerchief to her eyes at the reminder of her Solomon.

"There, there, Mrs. Grundy," consoled Mrs. Claus, "I'm not so sure. But come, let us go into the shop. The baker's left everything open in his haste and I don't see Santa around anywhere."

II

WHERE SANTA WAS

Mrs. Claus did n't see Santa around anywhere because he was n't there to be seen. He was playing with the children of the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe, where he had more fun than almost any place else in the world. If you had ever played in a shoe you 'd see for yourself just how very much fun it was.

The Old Woman had started housekeeping in a dancing-slipper, you know; but later, when she had so many children she did n't know what to do, it

became necessary to find a bigger place. So she moved them all, bag and baggage, into a rusty old laced shoe at the edge of the kingdom, where she hoped all would be well. "It's just as bad to move from one shoe to another," said the Old Woman, "as it is to move when it's a house." And as for housecleaning in a shoe — my goodness, the Old Woman just groaned whenever you mentioned it!

But the laced shoe was hardly any better than the little old crowded dancing-slipper, for the children just would use the shoe strings for a jumping-rope and even for a swing, until the strings were quite worn out. And there they were, the shoe unlaced, and the rain

and the wind and the dew coming in on them all night! No, it would never do. So the poor Old Woman went shoe-hunting once more.

This time she had found a fine buttoned shoe right down at the corner of Pudding Lane and Pinafore Pike, whose heel, it is true, was run over quite a bit, but which otherwise was just the thing. And here it was that Santa was playing this very day with Judy and Tony and Jocko and Jumbo and all the other little unnamed children of the Old Woman. (She had so many children there were not names enough to go around, you know, so she just called the younger ones anything that came into her head, and

somehow they never seemed to get mixed up at all.)

Santa was certainly having a most hilarious time in the shoe on this afternoon. After the children had played tag through the buttonholes a while, they all played leapfrog over the buttons, and such a shouting and laughing and spilling around as there was! If you want to have the most fun in the world, just try a game of leapfrog over the buttons of a shoe.

But before long the Old Woman appeared around the bend of Pinafore Pike, and Santa knew he'd have to go home so she could button up the shoe tightly for the night.

"Oh dear," sighed the Old Woman.

"Such excitement in the town about this Piper! I declare, I'm all tuckered out. I don't feel a bit like giving you your nightly spanking, children."

"Then why don't you leave out the spankings?" inquired Santa. He never had understood why the Old Woman gave the children their spankings in such a businesslike manner.

"Leave out the spankings?" repeated the Old Woman. "Why, I couldn't do that. Sometimes we don't have enough broth to go around, but there are always plenty of spankings. Won't you stay and have one, too, Santa?" offered the Old Woman politely.

"Oh no, thank you," replied Santa fearfully, and turning his back, he

started home, running. But all the way home he heard the children of the Old Woman crying as they got their spankings, and if there had n't been a surprise waiting for him at home, he would have cried himself, I am sure.

III

COMPANY AT THE CLAUSES'

THE surprise was Mother Goose, who was in the garden with Mrs. Claus and Santa's little brothers, the two batches of twins.

"Why, Mother Goose, I did n't know you were coming!" exclaimed Santa, hugging his grandmother until he almost choked her.

"Well," said the old lady, "I did n't know it myself. But I was up visiting the Man in the Moon and I thought I 'd just drop in for the night."

"The Man in the Moon? Mother Goose, did you really visit the Man in

the Moon?" Santa's round face was filled with wonder.

"Oh yes," answered his grandmother. "The old fellow often invites me up there for week-ends. It's a nice summer place. So cool." Then she turned to Mrs. Claus, who was looking extremely wise. "Nellie," she said, "don't put any nonsense into the child's head. I've told you many times how matters stand there."

But Mrs. Claus kept on making eyes, though Santa didn't even see her, so overcome was he at the thought of visiting the Man in the Moon. He wished, all to himself, that his grandmother would take him the next time she went. But he knew she wouldn't,

for Mother Goose never took anybody on her wonderful journeys. There was only room for one on the gander.

"Is the Man in the Moon a nice man?" he asked Mother Goose.

"Oh yes, nice enough," answered his grandmother. "Rather set in his ways, like all bachelors, but very amiable if he is n't crossed. He 's rather disturbed at present, Nellie" (she was now speaking to Mrs. Claus again), "because some of the professors in London are saying that the moon is made of green cheese. And of course, it is n't at all."

"Is n't it?" asked Santa. "What is it made of, Mother Goose?"

"Well, nobody knows that, but the Man knows it is n't green cheese, any-

way, and somehow he seems to resent the idea very strongly. Pooh! I should n't care what the professors say; but as I said, he 's rather crotchety. He needs a wife, that man does."

"Why don't you marry him, Mother Goose?" asked Santa.

At this Mrs. Claus laughed aloud, and Mother Goose looked at her sharply again.

"My stars, child!" she said to Santa. "What would I do with such an old stay-at-home as he is? Besides, I don't like that climate. Just think, Santa, the Man in the Moon does n't have any garden at all!"

"No garden?" asked Santa. "No flowers, Mother Goose?"

"Not one," answered his grandmother. "It's too cold. And that's the reason he has his own special flowers here on earth. He waits every night for the moonflowers to blossom, you know, and he watches them until they fade again with the sun. He loves his moonflowers, even if they are far off, and he feels very sad that he can't have them there on the moon with him."

When Santa heard this, he did feel sorry for the Man in the Moon. He thought how lonely the Man must be, waiting all by himself for his moonflowers to open. He decided, right then, that he would sit up with the Man that night, and keep him company

while he watched the moonflowers unfold in the evening stillness.

So after supper, while Mother Claus was busy putting the five younger children to bed, Santa crept out into the garden. He looked up to see — yes, there was the Man. Then he sat down and stared hard at the moonflower vine, where a few white petals were already open, looking to Santa like sleepy butterflies.

But *he* was the sleepy one; for the next thing he knew it was morning, and he was waking up in his own bed.

"My eyes played a trick on me," he said to himself. He did wish he had n't been such a sleepyhead.

IV

UNWELCOME GUESTS IN PUDDING LANE

That morning, before the baker had come back from his search party, the Claus family heard a terrific racket and clatter down Pudding Lane. Mother Claus put her hand to her ear.

"Hark, hark," said she. "The dogs do bark!"

"Then the beggars are coming to town," said Mother Goose.

"Mercy on us," cried Mrs. Claus. "What is Pudding Lane coming to? One day we have a rascal in the town, and the next it's beggars."

They ran to the window and sure

enough, there they were — the three beggars, one in rags, and one in tags, and one in a trailing velvet gown that looked a hundred years old. They had red noses and prickly beards, these beggars, and yet they were jolly-looking, too, if you saw the twinkle in their eyes.

"They 'll eat us out of house and home," complained Mrs. Claus. "Such appetites men never had in this world. Would n't you think they 'd get to work and earn their living, like respectable folks ? "

"Oh, I don't know," said Mother Goose. "They enjoy life, I guess."

At this slipshod remark, Mrs. Claus gave a loud snort. She really did n't

know what to make of Mother Goose sometimes, even if she was her own mother. Just then, the first beggar stuck his head in at the door, so close to Mrs. Claus that when she saw him she shrieked aloud.

"Happy New Year, Mrs. Claus," he greeted her.

"It is n't New Year at all," she snapped. "Well, you 're here again, I see."

"Here again," admitted Rags, "and with my two fascinating companions, Tags and Velvet Gown."

Rags came in, followed by Tags and Velvet Gown. Such disreputable, raggedy beggars you never saw. Santa for a moment was afraid of them, and then

" Happy New Year, Mrs. Claus," he greeted her

(Page 22)

he looked for the twinkle in their eyes, and finding it, felt comfortable again.

They walked straight into the kitchen and sat down at the table, and Mrs. Claus, complaining every minute, set them out such a breakfast as they had not seen in many a day.

"The baker has the best cook in the kingdom," they told her, and the good woman in spite of herself was pleased at the compliment.

"By the way," went on Tags, "where is the baker this morning?"

"Here I am," said a voice at the door, and there he was indeed. But he did not look like the fierce pirate of the day before. For the long search had tired him out; his coat-tails

drooped, his boots were muddy, and his roaring voice was faint with exhaustion.

"Did you hang him?" asked Mrs. Claus.

"No," replied the baker, "we did n't hang him."

"Why not?" Mrs. Claus wanted to know; but before the baker could answer, "Hang who?" questioned Rags. (A beggar's grammar is usually quite as shabby as his clothes.)

"The Pied Piper," Mr. Claus answered his question.

"Ah yes, a delightful fellow," said Rags.

"Charming," pronounced Tags.

"Enchanting," put in Velvet Gown.

Mr. Claus frowned at the beggars.

"He is a rascal, and the King is going to hang him if—"

"If what?" asked Mrs. Claus. She knew something had gone wrong and she just could n't wait to hear.

"If anybody can find him," answered Mr. Claus.

And then the truth came out, although Mr. Claus did hesitate to tell it: the truth was that all the men in Pudding Lane had hunted for the Pied Piper all night long and never a trace had they found of him, although they had searched east, and west and over the cuckoo's nest, high and low, north and south, in fact, in every hole and corner of the kingdom.

Mr. Claus told the whole story and finished it up with a deep sigh.

"Great snakes!" he said, "but I'm tired."

He frowned at the beggars again, and they, for once in their lives, took the hint and departed, while Mr. Claus washed off the mud and partook of a large breakfast, glad to be in the bosom of his family once more.

V

BAD NEWS

But there could be no peace in Pudding Lane.

For that very same morning, just as everybody was settling down to business again, hoping that the Pied Piper had gone away forever, down the street came the Town Crier ringing his bell like mad. At the sound of the bell everybody came running out, the Spratts, Mother Hubbard, Mrs. Muffett — oh, just everybody, and they all began asking each other what in the world was the matter.

The Town Crier was calling out the news, of course, but the bell made so much noise you could n't hear what he said. The old man always did that when something exciting happened, and it was really very provoking to know it was exciting and not to know *what* it was. At last, however, the butcher, who was the biggest man in town with the biggest voice, bellowed out, "What's the matter?" in such loud tones as completely to drown out the bell.

"Eh?" said the Town Crier. "Oh!" and then he called out the piece of news: "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down!"

The whole town exclaimed and

gasped and stared. London bridge was falling down! What a calamity!

And then they all began to talk. The only people there who had ever seen London Bridge were Mother Goose and Tom, the piper's son, but that did n't prevent anybody from talking about it, of course. Any man has the right to stand in Pudding Lane and say what a dreadful thing it is for London Bridge to be falling down. And that 's what every man and every woman did, until there was n't another thing left to say.

But all at once, in the midst of the clacking voices and the confusion, the candlestick-maker cried out in a queer voice, and everybody looked to see

what was the matter. The matter was that the candlestick-maker had had an idea, and it so terrified him that he could n't tell anybody what it was at all. But after a moment he was able to speak.

"If London Bridge is falling down," he shouted, "then the Pied Piper must still be close to Pudding Lane."

Of course! Nobody had thought of it at all before, but it must be true, for the Pied Piper could n't get out of the kingdom unless he crossed London Bridge on one side, or went into Hamelin on the other. And of course he would n't dare show his nose in Hamelin. He 'd know better than to do that.

"Then the wretched man is still here," cried all the mothers.

"He must be still here," answered the fathers.

The candlestick-maker held out a candlestick in front of his nephew, Jack.

"Jack, be nimble, Jack, be quick," he urged, "and run tell the King what we say — that the Pied Piper is still about."

Jack jumped over the candlestick as he was bidden, and in a flash was gone to see King Cole.

The word came back from the King that the search for the Pied Piper must begin all over again, at which all the men, especially Mr. Claus, looked very doleful.

"It's weary work," said Mr. Horner.

"It is indeed," they all agreed. But a king is a king, particularly when he is an angry king; so there was nothing to do but start out again to find the Pied Piper and hang him.

VI

A WALK WITH MOTHER GOOSE

When Mr. Claus had departed, Mother Goose told her daughter she wanted to take a walk.

"One gets so tired of riding," she added, nodding toward the gander. But little Santa thought to himself that *he* would never get tired of riding on that wonderful gander.

"I 'll take Santa with me," she told Mrs. Claus. "And we 'll let the gander lead, Santa, shall we?"

So they started out, Mother Goose and Santa Claus behind the gander

who solemnly waddled down Pudding Lane. And where did that gander go? Straight to the shoe where the Old Woman lived!

"What's this?" asked Mother Goose. "Why in the world do you suppose he wants to stop here?"

"Perhaps he wants Judy to go walking with us," suggested Santa, who was very fond of Judy.

"Perhaps he does," assented Mother Goose. So she marched straight up to the old woman who was making beds in the heel of her home, and asked her if Judy might go walking.

"Of course," said the Old Woman. "Only do get her back by spanking-time. I'd never miss her, you know,

in the crowd, so I leave it to you, Mother Goose, to have her here safe and sound."

"You may trust me for that," promised Mother Goose, and they were off — the old lady and the two children following the gander who stepped gravely along in front.

At the end of Pudding Lane they met Simple Simon, and Mother Goose, who was a kindly soul, stopped to chat with the fellow a bit.

"I 'm waiting for the coach," he told her, "to go to Banbury Cross. The last one did n't go that far."

"Here comes one," said Mother Goose. "This one goes right past Banbury Cross, Simon."

But Simon stood still as the coach stopped in front of him.

"Hurry and get in, Simon," urged Mother Goose.

Simon did not budge. The coach-driver cracked his whip impatiently.

"Simple Simon, get into that coach this very minute," commanded Mother Goose.

"It goes too far —" began Simon; but just then the coach started to drive off, and Mother Goose, pushing with all her might and main, shoved Simon into the seat, where he sprawled helplessly for a moment before he could get himself together again. The coach was moving rapidly away now, and Simon stuck his head out of the window.

"But this coach goes too far," he called back to Mother Goose with a troubled face. "I only want to go to Banbury Cross."

"Is n't he absurd?" exclaimed Mother Goose, exasperated. "Is n't he ridiculous? As if it makes any difference how far the coach goes, so long as it goes far enough!"

You see, he really was simple.

VII

SOMETHING VERY EXCITING HAPPENS

They had not gone very far when the dignified gander, who was marching along with such an elegant air, suddenly began to act very unlike himself. He stopped still, and flapped his wings, and squawked a moment, then taking a hop, a skip, and a jump, he whirled around in his tracks, after which he began all over again, flapping his wings and squawking.

"Has the fowl gone mad?" cried Mother Goose. "Here, here, here!" she called to the gander, but he only whirled the faster, squawked the louder,

and flapped the harder. It was very alarming. Mother Goose did not know what to do at all, and Judy and Santa were almost afraid of the crazy bird.

In a moment, however, the gander stopped whirling, and with one last noise he took a long jump and started to run at high speed. Mother Goose and the children hardly knew for an instant what was happening; then they, too, started to run, to catch the runaway gander.

What a chase that was! The gander could run almost as fast as he could fly, and he went down the road, over the brook, into the woods, with the children right after him, and Mother Goose a little farther behind. The poor

old lady could n't run very well, for her skirts got in the way, her spectacles flew off her nose at every step, and she got out of breath so soon! But she kept at it, for she did want to catch that gander, and she was saying to herself that it would be a fine spanking he 'd get, once she laid her hands on him — the rascal!

They were now in the woods, and at last Santa — who, being a boy, was far ahead, of course — was just about to catch the tip-end tail-feather of the gander, when he was startled by a voice in his ear. "Hello, Santa," said the voice. And there in the thicket whom should he see but the villainous Pied Piper himself.

"Oh dear!" thought Santa to himself. "What shall I do?" But the Pied Piper at that moment reached out and caught the gander, and that moment, too, Mother Goose and Judy came up, Mother Goose scolding the gander with all the breath she had left. She did not see the Pied Piper at first, for his clothes were brown like the branches in the thicket. She did not see him at all until he stepped out a little bit, where he stood smiling at her — a smile that did look exceedingly pleasant for such a villain as he.

VIII

A CONVERSATION WITH THE PIED PIPER

Mother Goose just stared a moment before she addressed him.

"Well, wretched man, we've got you at last," she said.

"Oh, come," said the Pied Piper, smiling again at the stern face of Mother Goose. "Come, Mother Goose, let's be friends, won't you? I'm really not a villain at all, you know, but the kindest-hearted fellow in the world!"

"You've taken a poor way to show it," retorted the old lady, sharply. "Taking children away from their home!"

"It was just a joke," began the Pied Piper.

"A sorry joke," pronounced Mother Goose.

"I did n't mean to keep the children," went on the Pied Piper. "But now that I 've got them in my Cave of Delight, they won't go home! I 've tried my best, Mother Goose, but they won't leave me."

"Stuff and nonsense," replied Mother Goose, a bit rudely, it must be admitted. Then her curiosity got the better of her and she asked: "Your Cave of Delight? What is that? And where, pray?"

"I have a beautiful cave, dear Mother Goose," answered the Pied

Piper, "where I keep orphans and beggars and other lonely people. It's under Honeysuckle Hill."

"Honeysuckle Hill!" cried out Santa — the first word he had spoken. "Why, that's the hill where we get water, where Jack and Jill fell down!"

"The very one," answered the Pied Piper. "If they had fallen down the other side, they would have tumbled right into my Cave."

"'Orphans and beggars and other lonely people,'" repeated Mother Goose. "Humph! Well, I must say that does n't sound very wicked. But" — she was sharp and stern again — "it's the children of Hamelin I'm thinking of."

"They *won't* go home," said the Pied Piper. "I wish you'd believe me, Mother Goose."

"If wishes were horses, beggars might ride," retorted Mother Goose.

"As a matter of fact, wishes are horses," the Pied Piper answered strangely. He piped three notes on his pipe, and out of the woods came three beautiful white horses, and mounted on them the raggedy, dirty, prickly-bearded beggars, Rags and Tags and Velvet Gown.

"Bless my soul," said Mother Goose aghast. "Beggars on horses! What a sight!" She turned to them. "I knew you were up to some mischief when I saw you this morning."

But the beggars made no answer. They merely smiled, bowed, waved their dirty hats, and cantered off, back in the direction from which they had come.

"Come, Mother Goose," proposed the Pied Piper. "Come, let me take little Santa here and Judy into my Cave of Delight for an hour's visit. Callers are not usually allowed, and I could n't permit a grown-up to visit it, even you, Mother Goose. But I want to prove to you, through the children, what a kind-hearted fellow I really am."

IX

MOTHER GOOSE'S ANSWER

The upshot of it was that Mother Goose consented to let Santa and Judy go with the Pied Piper to his Cave of Delight, though, as she said, she shook in her shoes at the thought of it. But the Pied Piper did act like such a kindly chap, now that they knew him better, and the children did beg so hard to be taken to the Cave, that Mother Goose just could n't refuse. Besides, she was curious to know more about the Pied Piper herself.

It was agreed that Mother Goose and the gander should stay outside

right at the door of the Cave, and that Santa should have around his finger a long string, which at the other end should be tied around the gander's leg.

"Then," said the Pied Piper, "if the children become afraid, Santa can pull the string, and you and the gander can come rushing to their rescue."

"And we'd come a-flying," promised Mother Goose grimly. "You may be sure of that."

They walked a few steps to Honeysuckle Hill, the Pied Piper piping a few notes now and then of that exquisite music of his, Santa and Judy skipping and jumping in their excitement, Mother Goose wondering to herself if she was a foolish old lady to

allow such a caper as this. As for the gander, he had quite recovered his former sober air. The scolding Mother Goose had given him would last the silly bird quite a while, for it was really very humiliating for a fowl of his standing to be rebuked in public as he had been.

"It's right and natural to live in a cave," the Pied Piper was saying. "Who wants to live in a house, anyway?"

"It's very nice to live in a shoe," piped up Judy.

But they were now at Honeysuckle Hill. At the foot of the hill Mother Goose and the gander took their stand.

"Have them back soon," admonished Mother Goose.

"In an hour from now," promised the Pied Piper.

He lifted a spray of honeysuckle from the side of the hill, and a small opening appeared. He pushed Judy and Santa in and followed them rapidly. They took one quick breath. They were in the Pied Piper's Cave!

X

THE PIED PIPER'S CAVE

But the Cave was not a big black pit such as they had heard about, at all! As they looked around in their first hasty glance, Santa and Judy thought they must be in Heaven, or London, or some other wonderful place.

It was so shiny! They had never seen such light before. It seemed as if all the candles in the world must be alight, and Santa and Judy, who were used to going to bed with one, blinked at the blaze.

The Pied Piper, noticing their dazzled eyes, pointed to the waxen can-

dles set in the silver walls of his Cave.

"We burn them at both ends here," he explained. "Pudding Lane does n't believe in that, but I find it gives a great deal more light."

"It 's very beautiful," said Judy. She wished her mother would burn candles that way. It got very dark down in the toe of the shoe at night, and Judy, though she knew it was foolish, got almost afraid to go there.

"It 's light here all the time," said the Pied Piper. He showed them a brilliant sun above.

"Does the sun never set?" asked Santa.

"Oh, we have two," replied the Pied Piper airily. "And I 'm thinking of

putting in another. Twelve hours is pretty long for anybody's sun to be on duty."

Two suns, and a third to come! Who had ever heard of such a thing?

"But it does rain here," continued the Pied Piper. "I'll have a little shower for you if you like."

"Oh no," answered Santa politely. "I don't especially care for rain."

But before they could take another breath, Santa and Judy were amazed to see a shower of kittens and puppies come tumbling to the ground. Such cunning little animals as they were! There were fat white puppies with stubby tails; wobbly brown puppies with tiptilted ears; gray, fuzzy kittens,

yellow kittens, tiny, shiny black ones; and all of them squealing and mewing and squirming and tumbling in the most astonishing hodgepodge you can imagine.

"You see, it rains cats and dogs here," said the Pied Piper calmly.

Just then the tiniest kitten of all tumbled right into Judy's apron, and at the same time a jolly little puppy sprawled plump down into Santa's fat arms. The Pied Piper smiled at them.

"Keep them if you like," he said. "We've had a good deal of rain here lately, so we've quite enough to go 'round. But now," he continued, "we must go on. There are lots of things to show you. Would you like to see

"You see, it rains cats and dogs here," said the Pied Piper calmly

(Page 541)

the castles in the air that the orphans and beggars have built? They are really quite lovely and no two rooms are alike. You won't have time to go through them all, but they're worth seeing."

XI

THE WONDERFUL CASTLES

"Oh yes," replied both the children. "We have never seen any castle except old King Cole's, and his is n't in the air."

"But he doubtless has one there," the Pied Piper answered. "Most people do. You 'll have them yourselves when you grow older. Come, we have only to cross that bridge and we 'll be there."

But Judy had stopped to spell out a sign that hung on the bridge. Now Judy was a jolly little girl, all right, but she did have trouble with her les-

sons, and spelling puzzled her most of all. After much hard work, however, she made it out. It said: *You must not cross this bridge before you get to it.*

She read it over twice and then spoke out: "But how could you cross it before you get to it? It sounds a little — silly, to me."

"Well, people do it just the same," the Pied Piper told her. "It *is* silly for them to, but they do."

Judy thought this was very amusing and she laughed at the thought of people doing such a foolish thing. But she never really understood that sign until she grew up.

Santa asked where the children of

Hamelin were, and the orphans and beggars and other lonely people.

"Oh," said the Pied Piper, "I have to have a little privacy. So they stay up there in their castles in the air, most of the time. We'll see them now. First we'll go to the beggars' castle, shall we?"

With that the Pied Piper squatted on the ground and then took a big leap, and the children were astonished to see his figure flying high into the air.

"Do the same," he called down to them. They did, and felt themselves flying, too. Such fun as it was! But it was over in a flash, and they were high in the air in front of some winding marble steps leading up to the beg-

gars' castle, which gleamed in the sun, a shining gold heap, pure gold.

"It's a bit gaudy," apologized the Pied Piper. "But it's their idea of happiness, and I humor them in it. There's nothing really to see but gold furniture and servants, but we'll have a peep, anyway."

He took the children into the castle, the richest-looking place they had ever seen, where a manservant in red velvet bowed low to them and showed them into the parlor. There, lolling in luxurious ease over the gold furniture, drinking tea out of gold goblets, eating beefsteak from gold plates, were the dirty, tattered beggars whose castle this was. It was almost funny to see

them acting like princes in their rags, and it was almost sad. Yet, thought Santa, they did look happy, so he decided it must be all right.

"They won't shave or dress up, of course," said the Pied Piper. "A beggar does n't seem to be happy if he is clean. And they *will* eat such rich food and lie around so much, I must admit that they are not as healthy as they might be. Still, it's their castle and they may do as they like in it."

Next, said the Pied Piper, they'd go see the orphans' castle in the air. In another minute they were in front of a big white house, with flower gardens on all sides, and Santa and Judy saw more children than they had ever seen

in their lives, playing on the grass, looking out of the windows, running in and out of the doors. And always beside them were plump, pink-cheeked women in blue aprons.

"This castle is full of mothers," explained the Pied Piper. "The orphans all want mothers; most of them have two or three! It crowds things pretty badly, but I don't mind."

Santa and Judy went up on the porch and all the orphans came crowding around them and begged them to stay and play games. Santa looked at the Pied Piper and he nodded his head.

"Ten minutes," he said. "Our time is short, you know."

With a whoop the orphans swarmed

out on the green lawn and in a second they had Santa and Judy in their midst, playing the most riotous games you could think of. What fun it was! And how they laughed! Santa and Judy could now see why the children of Hamelin were not anxious to leave.

The ten minutes were up in just a minute, as Judy said, but the orphans didn't want them to go at all, and crowded around them, begging them to stay.

"Why not stay forever?" suggested one.

"Oh," said Santa, a bit scared at the thought, "we'd like to, but we're going back to Mother Goose and Pudding Lane. We really must."

"But the children of Hamelin are never going back," persisted the orphans.

"No," said the children of Hamelin, suddenly appearing at the doorway of the castle, "we're never going back. It's so much fun here, Santa Claus! Much more fun than Hamelin was. We never have to wash our ears here, and we may eat all the candy we like, and we don't even have to go to bed if we don't want to! Please, please stay!"

"Come," whispered the Pied Piper. "Don't argue with them. I've tried my best to get them to go home, but they won't stir."

XII

THE PIED PIPER'S FARM

"WELL," said the Pied Piper next, "it must be about time to eat," an idea that Santa and Judy approved of highly.

The Pied Piper said they would eat at the farm, and took them along a lovely road between fields of flowers — cornflowers and poppies and lilies.

In another moment they had reached the farmhouse. It was a tiny place, vine-covered, and its mistress was a plump little dairymaid with red cheeks and white arms. When they arrived

she was serving a couple of beggars with plates of pie.

"What kind of pie are the beggars eating?" asked the hungry Santa. It looked very tempting to him.

"Humble pie," was the response. "The beggars get rather proud up there in the castle, so I have them brought down here for a helping of humble pie every now and then."

"Is humble pie good?" asked Santa.

"Not bad. A little sour. But you feel so much better after you 've eaten it. You don't need any, though, Santa, so we 'll have other things. Bring us some milk, Daisy," he said to the dairymaid.

But the dairymaid, instead of going

off for the milk, curtseyed to the Piper and then went close to him and whispered something in his ear, at which he frowned anxiously.

"Again?" he asked her.

She nodded, a tiny worried frown in her white forehead, too.

"Was there not enough to send to the orphans' castle to-day?" he inquired.

She shook her head.

"Dear, dear," said the Pied Piper, "this *is* distressing." He looked at the children. "It's the milk," he said. "It's running very low now. The supply has been poor for quite a while; I declare, I don't know what to do."

"Can't you get a new cow?" asked the practical Santa. The Clauses once

had trouble with their cow and Father Claus had simply bought a new one and all was well again.

"Oh, we don't have cows, you know," came the astonishing reply. "Why, bless me! I have n't shown you the fountain, have I?"

XIII

THE FOUNTAIN

With that, he hustled the children right out of the little vine-covered farmhouse, down the path, and into a near-by grove of green young lime-trees, where in a tiny open place they saw a thin trickle of — well, of what, they did n't know. It looked like milk, but it acted like water, and nobody had ever heard of anything like that, of course.

The Pied Piper went up to it sadly.

"Just a thin little trickle," he said. "It 's the milk of human kindness,"

he explained, turning back to the children.

"The milk of human kindness?" they repeated. They did n't know in the least what he meant.

"Yes," he told them. "When the people of Pudding Lane and Hamelin and Banbury Cross are generous and kind and noble, this fountain gushes out in a torrent. It 's a most beautiful sight — rushing, gushing milk rising in jets and falling again, giving plenty for everybody. But lately it has flowed so feebly. People are n't very good any more, I guess. My orphans will starve if the fountain does n't begin to flow fast again."

The poor Pied Piper looked very

troubled, and Santa made a promise to himself right then: that he'd be, oh, so generous and kind when he got back to Pudding Lane, so that the fountain would flow fast to feed the orphans here!

Just then, the kitten that was asleep in Judy's arms woke up and gave a small squeak. At the same instant, the puppy that Santa was carrying opened his eyes and let out a gruff, feeble little bark.

"They're hungry," said the Pied Piper. He looked at the fountain. "Isn't that too bad? There's only enough milk there for you children. The kitten and the puppy will have to wait until somebody does something

kind somewhere, and the fountain flows again."

Santa looked at Judy and Judy looked at Santa. They both looked at the fountain, and they looked at the kitten and the puppy. The milk looked mighty good and they were extremely hungry. But the poor little kitten and puppy were hungry, too. Santa spoke.

"Let's —"

"Let's do," agreed Judy before he got any further.

"We're going to give them the milk," cried Santa to the Pied Piper, and he ran to the fountain to get the milk.

But just as he had drained off the

last drop for the hungry little animals, the fountain suddenly began to flow again, very fast, the milk rushing out in great streams.

"Why!" exclaimed Santa, greatly surprised.

"Goodness!" breathed Judy.

The Pied Piper laughed at their wonder.

"You did a kind act, you see. Now drink to your heart's content."

And Santa and Judy had never thought of that!

He peered through the lime trees at the sun, when they had finished.

"Come," he commanded them. "Hurry! Your hour is up. We must run back as quickly as we can."

And sure enough, already Santa felt a tug at the string on his finger. Mother Goose was getting impatient and had pulled the string on the gander's leg. So they ran as quickly as they could and were soon at the door behind the spray of honeysuckle.

"Good-bye," said the Pied Piper, smiling in his pleasant way at them.

"Good-bye," said the children. Judy put up her lips to be kissed and Santa hugged the Pied Piper.

"Speak a good word for me to Mother Goose and King Cole," he asked them.

"Oh, we will, we will!" promised Santa and Judy.

They were just going through the

opening of the Cave when with one accord the kitten and the puppy leaped from their arms and ran back to the Pied Piper. Santa started back to get them.

"Go on," said the Pied Piper. "They never *will* leave me. Hurry!"

The next minute they were out on the hill again with Mother Goose and the gander, and Mother Goose was asking them a thousand questions.

XIV

HOME AGAIN

You should have seen Mrs. Claus when Mother Goose and Santa reached home once more and told her where Santa had been! She had her hands in some of the baker's dough when they came in, but when she heard the story she threw up those hands, floury and doughy as they were, and opened her mouth wide. She stood that way for almost a minute before she was able to speak.

"Well, I never!" she said. "And here I've been making buns as peaceful as anything."

It was then her turn to shower questions at Santa about the Pied Piper and his Cave of Delight, and Santa answered them as faithfully as he could. But of course he could n't tell everything at once.

"It all sounds too queer," said his mother. "You say the place was full of orphans and beggars?"

"Yes 'm," repeated Santa. "Full of 'em."

"Well, I never," said his mother again. And she kept on saying that to herself the rest of the day.

The baker came in from the shop after a while, and he had to be told the whole tale.

"Great snakes!" said the baker.

It was decided then and there that Santa should go to see the King the next morning, to tell him the real truth about the Pied Piper.

"For of course," said Mother Goose, "when King Cole hears what a good-hearted man the Pied Piper is, he'll change his mind about hanging him."

What an exciting life Santa was having! First he had visited the Pied Piper, whom nobody else on Pudding Lane had ever visited before, and now he was going to see old King Cole, all by himself!

Mrs. Claus sat up half the night to sew new white-cotton trimming on his old red suit. She did wish Santa had a new suit in which to call on the

King, but the Clauses could n't buy new suits every whipstitch, as she put it.

Santa looked very well, however, when he was ready to start bright and early the next morning. His hair was plastered down close to his head; his shoes shone brightly at the toes (nobody noticed that he had forgotten to blacken the heels); his suit looked almost new with the fresh cotton trimming. But he was a trifle pale. The truth of it was that the little boy was frightened half to death over the whole affair. Old King Cole was known to be in a dreadful mood just now. He might scold, Santa thought.

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Claus, when he confided his fears to her. "He 'll

be thankful to you for the news. Now go along."

So Santa was packed off by himself to the palace, and he soon got to the big iron gateway, where two guards were fast asleep.

"Hey!" shouted Santa.

"Ho!" cried they, waking up.

At the palace it was said that the King was asleep. You see, the Clauses had completely forgotten that kings don't have to arise as early as bakers.

"Why," said the fiddlers three, "he's only gone to bed."

But just at that minute in came the King, looking very sleepy and cross, his crown on backward and his fur robe dragging behind. Santa jumped to his

feet and made a low bow, almost tipping himself over on his nose in the effort.

"Who's that?" cried the King. "Turn him over to the Queen. I declare, I really can't sleep a wink, I'm so worried about this Piper fellow."

There was Santa's chance! He was afraid to speak, but he did, anyhow, standing up as straight as he could and looking the cross old King right in the eye. Old King Cole listened unwillingly at first, but as he listened the cross look gradually faded from his face and he began to look like his merry old self again.

"And you're telling me the truth, Santa Claus?" he asked. "Of course

Santa jumped to his feet and made a low bow

(Page 80)

you are. I can see it shining in your honest little face. Ha, ha! This is great news! Ho, ho, ho! This is excellent news!"

He laughed so hard, the merry old soul, that Santa could not help joining in, and then the fiddlers three began to laugh too. How jolly it was!

But in the midst of his laughter, old King Cole had an unpleasant thought.

"The children of Hamelin are still there," he said. "I'll never let the Pied Piper go until the children of Hamelin come back."

"But the children of Hamelin won't come," pleaded Santa. "It isn't the Piper's fault. It was only a joke with him at first."

"But it's a poor joke," said the King. "The mothers of Hamelin are crying their eyes out right now for their children. No, I will not spare the Piper unless the children of Hamelin come back."

That was the King's last word on the subject, and a more disappointed family than the Claus family you have never heard of, when Santa went home with the sad news.

They all went to bed that night grieving for the Pied Piper, whose life was still in danger, even though he was a kind-hearted gentleman and not a rascal at all.

XV

HELPING TO FEED THE ORPHANS

The next day, Mother Goose went away on her gander, and Santa ran down to see Judy. But Judy was n't at home.

"She 's gone over to see Mother Hubbard," the Old Woman told him. "She took the poor dog a bone, I believe."

Then Santa remembered. He had promised himself to do kind things so the fountain of the milk of human kindness would flow again. Judy had already started, but he had been so busy feeling sorry for the Piper that

he had completely forgotten the poor little orphans.

What should he do? He thought of everybody on Pudding Lane. He might go over and see Jack, who had broken his crown a few weeks before, and was still in a rocking-chair with a bandage over his head. He might pay a visit to Humpty Dumpty, too. Humpty had had a great fall, one of the most serious cases Pudding Lane ever had. All the King's horses and all the King's men had been called in to assist, but they could n't put him together again, and it was feared the poor boy would be a permanent invalid.

He might take some meat to the Spratt's cat — a wretched animal, the

skinniest cat in Pudding Lane. For when a couple lick the platter clean as the Spratts did, it is naturally pretty poor pickings for the cat. Everybody on Pudding Lane said it would be better to be Mother Hubbard's dog than Jack Spratt's cat, because Mother Hubbard at least *tried* to feed her poor dog, but the Spratts never gave their cat a thought.

Santa resolved, too, that he would sit up with the Man in the Moon, though I 'll just tell you that he never really did, for every time his eyes would play that same trick on him, and he would find himself in bed the next thing he knew.

But he did start out doing the other

things, and he really did more kind things than you can possibly imagine.

Mrs. Claus was very proud of him.

"He *is* a nice little boy," she would admit when folks complimented him to her.

Judy, too, was busy doing things for people on Pudding Lane, but nobody knew, except Santa and Judy themselves, just why they were doing them. Nobody but those two knew that they were helping to feed the orphans and kittens and puppies in the Pied Piper's Cave of Delight.

XVI

A HULLABALOO DOWN PUDDING LANE

STILL the Pied Piper had not been caught, consequently he had not yet been hanged.

"He's a slippery chap," said the baker. "Now and again we have the trail, but we don't catch him, somehow. We'll have to go into that Cave yet," he finished up with a sigh.

The baker was sick and tired of the chase and so was every other man on Pudding Lane, and the fact of it was, they were n't looking very hard for the Piper any more.

It was deep into summer time now. Honeysuckle Hill was hot and dry; the honeysuckle vines were burned to bits by the sun. The roads were inch-deep with dust. It was summer's last fling and she was making the most of it. Everybody was hot and tired, but still the King kept the men out hunting for the Piper, and every morning the baker staggered in, worn and dusty from the hunt, and every night he started out with the other men on their hopeless quest. As the baker said, it was no way to spend the summer.

One morning, just after Mr. Claus had come in, while he was snatching a nap and Santa was minding the shop, Mrs. Claus heard what she called a hul-

labaloo down Pudding Lane. With a twin on each hand and the rest of the children at her heels she ran to the front window. There, 'way down at the end of the Lane, she saw a little crowd gathering. Simple Simon was there, gaping, old Toby Sizer, Mrs. Muffett, the piper and Tom, and every minute somebody else came running up to them. They were pointing toward Honeysuckle Hill. Mrs. Claus could hear their cries and see their agitated gestures, but from her window she could see nothing else.

"Mercy on us, what can it be now?" she asked herself; and with one look at the baker, who was snoring at his best, she dashed out of the house, the

five children hanging on to her at all ends. She flew down Pudding Lane toward the little knot of excited, frightened people.

"What is it?" she screamed.

They pointed toward Honeysuckle Hill, moaning and crying.

She looked. There, rising over the top of the hill, was a great flood. Mrs. Claus caught her breath.

"What is it?" she asked again, terrified.

"It's the ocean," answered somebody.

"It's the Flood," said somebody else.

"At first it was just a little thin stream," Mr. Horner told her.

"It's rising, rising, rising, all the time," groaned Mrs. Muffett.

It *was* rising, rising, rising, all the time. Mrs. Claus could see that the waves had gotten bigger since she had been there, just a minute or two. Over the top of Honeysuckle Hill came the great billows, then breaking, down came the flood over the hill, right toward Pudding Lane.

But it didn't look like the ocean to Mrs. Claus. Mrs. Claus had never seen the ocean, but she had read about it. The poets said it was green and blue, and this was white, creamy white, like chalk — no, like milk!

"It looks like milk!" she cried out.

"It's the end of the world," said Mrs. Grundy, solemnly. "Are we all prepared?"

At that, the women shivered and wept and the men growled in their throats.

"It looks like milk," persisted Mrs. Claus.

But they were all too busy trembling and groaning to listen to her.

"I ought to know milk when I see it," she held out.

But still nobody paid any heed.

Santa Claus, having heard the racket, was now coming down the lane. By this time the flood was roaring and swishing down Honeysuckle Hill like a great wild white beast, angry and powerful, that would soon be at the group of people to swallow them in one gulp.

"The end is here," they all said.

Somebody started to run.

"No need to run," said Mr. Horner. "A flood like this could find any corner, scale any height, break down any wall. Besides, where would you go? London Bridge is still down, you know."

So the people of Pudding Lane stood there, awaiting the end of their happy little village, quiet now, brave, wondering how many minutes it would be before they were eaten up by the great white monster.

XVII

A TURN IN EVENTS

But suddenly, over the peak of the topmost wave, there appeared a head, a curly little yellow head, and then another one, the head of a boy, stubby-haired and dark. It was a girl and a boy, and they were being flung down the side of the hill, riding the waves, shouting, laughing, enjoying the sport. More children followed, and more and more, as the round-eyed people of Pudding Lane watched.

"It's the children of Hamelin," shrieked Tom, the piper's son.

"It is, it is the children of Hamelin!" The cry was taken up.

And it was. They were tumbling down into Pudding Lane as fast as the great waves could fling them there, breathless and laughing with the fun they had had.

And then, before anybody had a chance to say another word, another head appeared over the top of the flood-covered Honeysuckle Hill. It was the Pied Piper, and he was waving to them with his old brown hat.

"Good-bye!" he called. "We're sailing away, my beggars and orphans and I, to another land. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!"

The orphans were shot into view for a moment, then the tousled heads of the beggars appeared.

"Good-bye!" they all called, and vanished behind the hill again. But the Pied Piper was still there. And for a moment the waves stopped roaring as he spoke.

"Thank you, Santa! Thank you, Judy!" he shouted. "You are dear, good children. Almost too good, for you did so many kind things you made the fountain flood over to-day. It has washed us out completely! But it washed the children of Hamelin out, too, so it's a blessing after all — the best deed you ever did. Ask their mothers if they don't think so. And now, good-bye forever! God bless you all! Farewell!"

With that the Pied Piper disappeared

too. And gradually the great white flood simmered down; and finally it stopped altogether. And the people of Pudding Lane went back home, to talk about the great event, and think about it, and then to talk about it some more.

And this was the way they found out what a fine fellow the Pied Piper was, after all. They saw for themselves, and there's no better way of learning a thing than that. They never saw the Pied Piper again, but they talked about him the rest of their lives — even Mr. Claus, in spite of the fact that he had slept through the whole affair, and did n't really know a thing about it.

125